

# Newsletter

March 1980, #20.

Blissymbolics  
Communication  
Institute





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BLISSYMBOLICS COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE

The purpose of this Newsletter is to publish articles and news items concerning Blissymbolics which uses visual symbols as an augmentative to communication. The many applications of Blissymbolics include the following:

- 1. Communication Difficulties
- 2. Cognitive and Language Development
- 3. Reading
- 4. International Communication

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ARTICLES

Readers are encouraged to contribute letters and articles in order to share their symbol experiences. Write to:

B.C.I. Newsletter  
Mrs. Barbara Rush, Editor  
64 Magnolia Drive, Hamilton  
Ontario, Canada, L9C 5T2

CONTENTS

From the Editor .....	2
Symbols for the Pre-School Child .....	4
Problem Solving Techniques .....	11
Learning is Our Game .....	11
Blissymbols and the Mobile TMR Child .....	12
The Importance of Communicating .....	17
Wendy - A Success Story .....	17
A Year to be Free .....	19
Using Blissymbols with the Adult Aphasic .....	21
Games and Arrays with Home Computers .....	22
Blissymbolics Communication Service .....	23
Communication Resource Centre at O.C.C.C. ....	24
Symbol Users' Corner .....	25

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Our twentieth issue begins with an article submitted by Clare Latham of the Wolfson Centre in London, England. Clare provides an in-depth study of the Centre's work with pre-school children.

Scouting the fertile grounds of British Columbia, Kate Wishart of the Blissymbolics Resource Centre in Vancouver was able to entice the next three contributions from symbol colleagues. First, teachers Heather McCain and Jane Blaiklock share with us some interesting ideas concerning problem solving techniques. Another teacher, Helen Marshall, relates how she was able to use soccer mania to motivate her students. The B.C. section closes with a most thought-provoking piece from speech pathologist, Rosemary Park, reflecting on past successes and future goals.

A story from Nora Rothschild reminds us all of the importance of very simple communication. Establishing consistent yes/no responses is the first step in any programme.

We are always happy to hear from parents. Betty and Ron Ferguson have realistic expectations for their daughter, Wendy. They know that success is relative to a child's ability and share with us their delight in Wendy's progress.

Many symbol instructors would dearly love to take a year's leave of absence to immerse themselves in Blissymbolic study. There is so much to learn. One lucky lady who did just this is Jane Green from Newfoundland and she writes to tell us of her experiences.

The last issue featured news from California and one article that missed our deadline is included here. Laurie K. Deal discusses her work with an adult aphasic.

The Pacific North-West Non-Vocal Communication Group publishes a regular newsletter for its members. We are grateful for permission to reproduce an article by Judy McDonald and Paul Schwejda concerning the use of home computers.

Margrit Beesley requests your assistance in furnishing material for the Communication Resource Room at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre.

We conclude with the symbol users' corner. Kate Wishart, the busy beaver, has submitted entries from two young B.C. symbol users, Shelley and Rick. Residents of The Villa in Toronto use the Lord's Prayer as depicted in Semantography.

It is our hope that readers and friends will share other symbol versions of prayers and graces in the Newsletter.

Grateful thanks are extended to all the contributing authors.

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The following quotation was included in the last issue:

"Communication from me to you  
Is socially the thing to do  
So as the means to do it changed  
Society was re-arranged."

I had mislaid the source and am happy that Shirley McNaughton was able to come to my rescue. Shirley reminded me that she first heard the quotation from Judy Montgomery, Project Co-ordinator, Plavan School Title LV-C, Fountain Valley, California, who first saw it at the Museum of Science of Industry in Washington, D.C.

.....

We have received a request from Anne Stiernquist, a Swedish Bliss instructor, for a pen-pal to write to one of her students, Jonatan. This young man is five years old, has cerebral palsy, and was introduced to Blissymbolics a few months ago. He would like to correspond in Bliss with a boy or girl aged five to seven years. Please write directly to:

Jonatan Tornberg  
Drakens Daghem  
Drakvagen 4  
141 49 RUDDINGE  
Sweden

.....

Ruut Koopmans writes from Holland to let us know that the article, "How To Teach Verbs" which appeared in the March 1979 Newsletter, has proved useful in the classroom. Another problem she experiences is how to teach the evaluation indicator and the concept of adjectives. Anyone with didactic experience in this area is requested to send their ideas to the Newsletter for the edification of all symbol instructors.

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The next issue will be published in July, 1980, and will feature articles collected by the Blissymbolics Resource Centre in Birmingham, Alabama. However, we need many more contributions to complete the Newsletter, so keep those letters and stories coming, folks! Please send them to the editor by June 1st, 1980.

Barbara Rush  
EDITOR

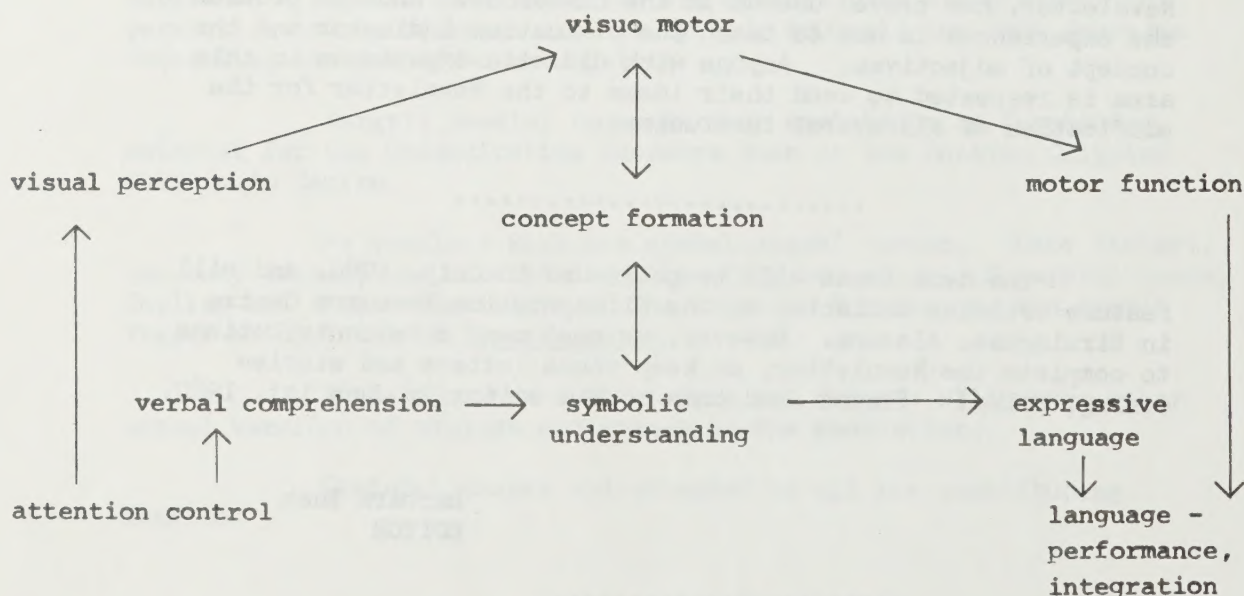
# SYMBOLS WITH THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

By: Clare Latham  
The Wolfson Centre  
London, England

Bliss symbols were originally devised as an international language for normal adults. Its success in the early 1970's with bright athetoid cerebral palsied children was so instant and obvious that those professionals involved in helping communication difficulties began to consider its application in areas where knowledge of the problem was less well known.

Two of the more recent applications have been with the pre-school child and the mentally retarded. Success with these two groups has been varied. It is this variability that I would like to look at in light of the work being done here at The Wolfson Centre. This has been well documented by the original Wolfson team, Jean Cooper, Molly Moodley and Joan Reynell in their book, Helping Language Development, 1978, published by Edward Arnold Limited.

Let us look at the processes that are developing in the young child and, at a slower rate, in the mentally retarded. Remember that each of these processes, or skills, are dependent on each other and that, without one, the complex network of language will break down.





Success in teaching young or retarded children is highly dependent on your knowledge of his/her ability to attend. Work illustrated in the book, mentioned in the first paragraph, outlines several important stages in Attention Development. They are as follows: -

#### Stage 1

Evident in the first year of life in a normal child, a stage of extreme distractibility. The child's attention is held momentarily by whatever is the dominant stimulus in the environment. He can still learn but, in teaching, the environment must be modified and the attention skill helped to develop.

#### Stage 2

This stage normally occurs in the second year of life. A child can concentrate for some time on a concrete task of his own choice. This is rigid and inflexible, all other stimuli being cut out. This is the "Terrible Two Stage". He can be taught but the teaching situation needs to be modified, providing only materials that you want him to use.

#### Stage 3

This stage normally occurs in the third year of life. An age when one might be considering introducing symbols. Here attention is still single channelled but allows for some adult guidance. Providing he can give his full attention to the speaker, he will take in an appropriate instruction then, giving his full attention to the task in hand, carry it through. He CANNOT do both at once. This is the stage when it is crucial to set his attention with "Listen" or saying the child's name or even lifting up his face to look at you.

#### Stage 4

Occurring in the fourth year of life. Here the attention is still single channelled but the CHILD now has control of it himself. Hearing you speak, he will stop what he is doing, look at you, then carry out the required instruction.

#### Stage 5

Occurring during the fifth year of life to the stage of school readiness, now the child can both listen to an instruction whilst carrying out a task.

A mistake is often made in assuming that a child is already at Stage 5 but it is important to remember that your normal pre-school child will not be at that level, so your teaching must be geared to his level of attention. In addition, from the large number of handicapped children passing through the Wolfson Centre, it is becoming increasingly obvious that, both mentally and physically, handicapped children develop through these phases at a much slower pace. As a caution, whilst a child may, in other ways, be ready to learn symbols, teaching could easily fail if one assumed that they had reached Stage 5 in their attention development.



Verbal Comprehension is an area well documented and most people are acquainted with some standardized test. Suffice it to say that, in teaching, one must use language that the child understands and where no verbal understanding is apparent, as much gestural and visual explanation as possible should be given.

Visual Perception is also an obvious area for consideration in teaching symbols. Where the more simple perceptual tasks of shape matching, shape sorting, etc., is not in evidence, then symbols will be beyond the child's ability.

Symbolic Understanding is an area which most people, involved in the teaching of symbols, are familiar with but, it is of crucial importance. The development of this skill is outlined below:-

1. Recognition of real items and their use.
2. Recognition of scaled representations (toys) and their use.
3. Recognition of 2 dimensional symbols i.e. pictures and their use.
4. Recognition of more abstracted symbol gesture of Blissymbols.
5. Recognition of the more abstract symbolic form, the written word.

Obviously, the young or retarded child must have reached the level of being ready to learn gesture or Blissymbols. He must be very comfortable with the picture level before learning symbols. As a cautionary note, he may slip back a stage in attention development when being introduced to new and more difficult material.

Concept Formation is another area well documented. It is obvious that, before introducing a symbol for a concept, (for example "big and little"), the child is fully aware of what bigness and littleness means. He must match for size and sort for size not just simple bricks but sort anything for size before the label is given. The normal child does all these things before acquiring the label "big" and so must the handicapped child if it is to have any value to him. With the older child, we rightly assume that this process has been achieved and it is sufficient to say to him that this symbol means "big" but the young and retarded child may not have reached this level.

Visuo Motor and Motor Function is another area where the physically handicapped child is grossly deprived and often requires a great deal of help. It is the area which is very closely associated with concepts and often tested in psychological tests through the use of bricks. It is the child's ability to handle three dimensional material and to see relationships of space, height, weight, etc. As mentioned earlier in this paragraph, it is an area that young physically handicapped children have little opportunity to spontaneously discover but, one which requires demonstration and assistance from the teacher, before expecting a full understanding of related concepts. It is often the physiotherapists who begin the very basic work of up and down, in and out, away and near, etc. If they can combine this work with introducing the appropriate symbols, then both the concept and symbol will be more meaningful.



Expressive Language. The major issue is to select the appropriate vocabulary. The vocabulary for each child will differ but it should be chosen with the following guidelines in mind.

1. It must be appropriate to the child's level of development.
2. From this developmental level, through necessity we have to be selective. This selection should aim at using the most meaningful content vocabulary.
3. However as well as being meaningful the chosen vocabulary must enable the child to develop early syntactical rules.

A suggested vocabulary should contain:

nouns  
personal pronouns  
adjectives  
verbs  
simple question forms.

Anne Warwick, a speech therapist working in Ottawa, Canada, has selected such a vocabulary, see appendix (1). This contains 10 personal pronouns, 2 questions, 8 verbs, 8 prepositions, 4 descriptions and 32 proper nouns.

Such a chart will still be limiting and there will be times when a child in order to understand his world around him will require special vocabulary items. These needn't be part of main chart but can be used in the appropriate situation only. Anne Warwick, appreciating this important factor, designed for her own group, special symbol charts by looking through Semantography or by making her own simple combines. See appendix (2). (Her complete Bliss programme has been written up in a delightful and highly instructive booklet, "Blissymbols and the Pre-school Child" available from Blissymbolics Communication Institute, Toronto.)

Having provided the appropriate but necessarily limited vocabulary, it is important to show the child how to make full use of it. This is effectively done by imitating back a child's response, and by extending his output with the addition of one or two appropriate symbols. The process of giving the child the correct model, is as important for the Bliss user as it is for the young verbal child. In addition, the habit of anticipating the child's needs must now be forgotten if communication is to succeed.

### Language - Performance Integration.

This theory follows the developmental stages first established experimentally by Luria (1961). The schedule includes stages in two aspects of language use.

1. Language as communication.
2. Language as an intellectual function for thinking.

The latter develops again in a certain way.

1. Adult language interferes. (1½ - 2 years)
2. Adult verbalization helps. (2 - 3 years)
3. Child externalizes language. (3 - 4½ years)
4. Language is internalized. (4½+ years)

It is very easy with a non-verbal form of communication, to assume the last stage has been achieved. In the group we are considering, it is particularly important to help them through the middle two stages. We should reinforce our natural, appropriate adult verbalization by pointing to the symbols and, at the same time, write the appropriate symbol interpretation on the board. Always, whilst talking generally to the child, point out symbols where possible. The third stage should also be encouraged. When they are thinking something out, always encourage them to point out their ideas on their chart.








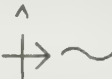












The use of language for communication is well known, but one final comment which is the result of hearing a familiar saying so often - "He seems to learn symbols but he doesn't use them". A child learns to use the words he acquires to communicate by listening all day to the people in his surroundings employed in this very activity. For the young and retarded who are not able to see the immediate possibilities of another way of communicating, one needs to assimilate what is the normal environment for a speaking child. Perhaps it is because signing is so easy for us to do simultaneously with speech that we say he prefers to sign, or that signing is easier. If we, as teachers, were in the habit of taking around a Bliss board, using it with all the children and between ourselves, perhaps the vitally important message of why we are teaching the symbols to the child would get across to him or her, where before it failed.

To conclude, it can be seen from our theoretical framework that symbols can be taught to the pre-school and retarded child. I hope it has also demonstrated some very easy pitfalls which we, the Bliss teachers, may easily fall into and perhaps it also illustrates that it is as much us who fail when the child fails.


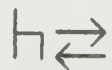




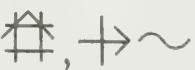




Appendix 1

I, me 11	you 12	they, them x 13	(to) like ^ 14	(to) come ^ 15	in, inside 16	a, an 17	happy ^ 18
baby OH	girl 19	boy 20	(to) want ^ 21	(to) give ^ 22	on 23	the 17	sad ^ 24
what thing ? 25	woman 26	man 27	(to) walk, go ^ 28	(to) have, has ^ 29	to 30	with +	big ^ 31
who ? 32	mother 33	father 34	(to) see ^ 35	(to) make ^ 36	for 37	not -!	little ^ 38
food 39	clothing 40	house 41	book 42	chair 43	cupboard 44	tree 45	sun 46
drink 47	container 48	outing 49	paper, page 50	table 51	colour 52	flower 53	rain 54
wheelchair 55	animal 56	show 57	pen, pencil 58	bed 59	night 60	country (side) 61	record 62
car, vehicle 63	sick ^ 64	school 65	story 66	toilet 67	day 68	bird 69	gathering 70

sun 	spring 	hot 	(to) grow 
boat 	tricycle 	bicycle 	(to) swim 
flower 	seed 	tree 	(to) play 
grass 	hill 	park 	country (side) 
lawn 	insect 	visitor 	(to) help 

## SUMMERTIME

swing 	rocking horse 	slide 
picnic 	wading pool 	sand box 
swimsuit 	towel 	rake 



## Problem Solving Techniques

By: Heather McCain and  
Jane Blaiklork  
Vancouver, B C.

Our program for multiply-handicapped children is part of an elementary school - grades one through seven in North Vancouver. All children in one of the special classes are in wheelchairs (cerebral palsy etc.) and are non-verbal. Part of the children's academic training involves the development of problem solving skills, for which we have been using "Modern Education Corporation" problem solving cards as a teaching tool. Problems and possible solutions are presented pictorially. Although the "M.E.C." cards are excellent in many respects, the problems they present are not always relevant to the world of a non-verbal child in a wheelchair. For example, a Problem Card might present: Mother asks daughter for a pair of scissors; Solution Card #1 - daughter throws scissors to mom across room; Solution Card #2 - daughter unwillingly hands mom the scissors wrong way round; Solution Card #3 - daughter willingly hands scissors to mom proper way round. The students task is to choose the best solution to the problem. We decided to make some new problem solving cards modelled on the "M.E.C." cards but presenting more relevant problems to a handicapped child. As none of the workers in the special class are artistically talented, we approached the grade seven teacher for help. Several of his art students offered their services. Our new problem cards deal with situations such as: What do you do if your wheelchair hurts you? Solution Card #1 - have a seizure; Solution Card #2 - Put your head down and look sad; Solution Card #3 - groan until someone comes and point to "hurt" on your Bliss board. Included also in our new set of problem cards are problems such as: What happens if your wheelchair is too big to fit into the car? What do you do if you don't like the person who is feeding you? What do you do if you are forgotten on the toilet? etc. These cards give the child a chance to practice effective solutions to a problem before it actually arises. Also the grade seven art students have found a non-threatening point of contact with the special class and are beginning to understand the world of the handicapped child.

## Learning Is Our Game:

By: Helen Marshall  
Vancouver, B.C.

There wasn't a more excited group of soccer fans than the Symbol School kids at Sunny Hill when Vancouver's White Caps won the World Cup.

Long-standing, avid sport fans, Chris and Rick, jump at the chance to go to seasonal games and young Ryan caught their interest and enthusiasm watching the action on T.V. or at the game. Shelley, Lindsay and Wallace, sharing news, join the fun and excitement, the exhilaration and despair following favorite teams.

Part of the exciting fun of the White Cap victory was the rousing song recorded by the team. The kids have sure had some fun, too, with that song!

With apologies to the White Caps, these words were printed on a chart to accompany their tune substituting a special color word in the appropriate place.

Red is the color,  
 Symbol Kids our name,  
 We want to know it  
 'Cause learning is our game!  
 So join in our chorus  
 And learn along with us,  
Red is the color,  
 Learning is our game!

The song generated all kinds of ideas. It's a terrific ice-breaker for visitors and volunteers. Helping the kids hold and wave construction paper flags marked with the particular color symbol, our friends catch the spirit of the moment, too! The Symbol Kids can't "sing" the words but there is plenty of vocalization, enthusiasm and noisy cheers.

This happy take-off launched the kids and their helpers into making orange ice cream, white popcorn, red jelly, green tissue paper fish mobiles and painting brown things found on their Symbol boards. On-the-spot Polaroid pictures add whoops of dismay and delight to these moments, illustrate classroom reading and symbol displays and recall the good times in our big, poster-display collection book. Rick and Chris matched Symbol sentences to appropriate lines, found words from the song on Rick's Symbol board and checked the dictionary definition to build a combined symbol for "Chorus."

Listening, singing and learning with their version of the White Cap's song, the Sunny Hill Symbol Team has stirred up lots of happy interest of their own.

### Blissymbolics and the Mobile T.M.R. Child

By: Rosemary Park  
 Speech and Language Pathologist  
 Coquitlam, B.C.

As I look back on nearly three years of Blissymbolic instruction in the schools I service, I wonder how symbols are working for us. Our non-verbal children are progressing well in many respects but they are not communicating on an interpersonal level as well as I would like. Why is this? - many questions seem to arise:

- a. Did we not assess the needs and symbol competency of the children correctly in the first place?
- b. Did the techniques used make language acquisition too much of a game?



- c. Are symbols always the most useful communication system for the children?
- d. Did we discover the essential elements that must be present when providing an alternative communication system?
- e. Have we documented workable methods of symbol teaching or was the approach always too haphazard?
- f. Did we encourage fully the child's own decision-making processes or did we impose a language upon him?
- g. Did we stimulate sufficiently the child's curiosity in his environment?

### Reflections

- a. We should have observed the children for a longer period in their total environment of home, school and outdoors, in order to assess their personal communication systems e.g. gesture (how refined was it, did it encompass vocabulary, syntax and morphology or was it extremely simple), the level at which the child is functioning spontaneously i.e. communication is highly significant for symbol introduction planning.
- b. The use of teaching aides and games converted to Bliss is essential and valuable. However we are apt to concentrate too heavily on games to begin with and forget the purposes of language i.e. communication of needs, emotions and desires. Communication priorities for each child have to be set.
- c. Blissymbols were chosen by us as the alternative communication system because the public is not required to learn another form of language to communicate with the Bliss user. However, we quickly discovered that for the mobile child a symbol board was not always the handiest immediate tool. It is difficult to climb the slide, swing, dig in the sand, dance, etc., while carrying a symbol board. By the time the board is fetched the desire to communicate has gone, the friend has gone to another activity and the subject matter has lost its value. We are strongly recommending that manual signing be encouraged along with Bliss for those active parts of the child's day.
- e. Documentation: I'm sure my experience in this area parallel's that of many other workers in the field i.e. time constraints! With a weekly case load of 70 children and only six of those Bliss users, evaluation of methods, board layout, etc., tends not to be documented. What works remains and is used. What doesn't, tends to be discarded with no analysis. In informal meetings and workshops we find the exchange of ideas and experiences productive. These meetings are too infrequent and it behooves those of us in the field to document more thoroughly what we are doing. Future teaching techniques depend on our experience.
- f. In the beginning we did impose a language form and content upon our Bliss users. We did not encourage sufficiently their own decision - making processes and allow them to guide us to appropriate symbols for them. We also tended to accelerate the rate of symbol acquisition in our enthusiasm. This is closely linked with item (a).

- g. To begin with, we did not realize the tremendous significance of curiosity linked with motivation in language learning. Our non-verbal children did not understand questions or their usefulness in discovering their world. More time should have been spent in this area.
- d. I have come to the conclusion that certain elements must be present before, or in conjunction with, the symbol program progression.
- 1. A Bliss co-ordinator is essential.
- 2. The class teacher must have attended an elementary Blissymbol workshop, be familiar with the system and be able to transcribe with ease.
- 3. The class teacher should be aware of language development and acquisition in the normal child.
- 4. The class teacher and parents should be fully involved in the initial communication assessment.
- 5. The parents of the child must be involved in symbol learning from the first moment. They must learn symbols along with or preferable ahead of their child. They must be able to write symbols and combine symbols in order to supply their child's language needs.

Why do I stress this? How often have you heard parents say, "I was so frustrated, I wanted to talk to John and the symbols were not on his board!" If the parents are learning the symbol system, they can provide the words when the need arises making the whole talking and learning situation a natural one.

The normally-developing child does not require an outsider to teach him language. He learns naturally from listening to and associating meaning with sounds in his environment. He imitates and experiments with the language he hears modelled by his parents. The average child requires to hear and repeat words and phrases 60 - 70 times before they are internalized and become part of his expressive language utterances. Trial and error is the essence. There is an on-going interactive verbal experience. That is part of his development.

The non-verbal child lacks this verbal experience and does not gain a large vocabulary or a knowledge of sentence construction and word order. There is little or no interactive language exchange between the child and parent and he has no idea of communicating his needs, desires and emotions through a language model. This child seldom has a definite Yes/No response and has poor decision-making processes.

The non-verbal child cannot be expected to immediately start using symbols, which are after all language, instead of his gesture system, or grunts or screams. We must make him aware of the advantages of words and language before he becomes motivated enough to talk with symbols.



It is vital that the co-ordinator, parents and teacher write down in Bliss all the child's and the adult's questions and responses, so that the child receives a visual picture of the language being used. In this way the child learns vocabulary, sequencing and patterns of language and gains interactive verbal experience parallel to his normally-developing brothers and sisters. This approach in turn fosters the realization within the teacher and parent that they are "talking with" the child, not merely pointing to symbols and shapes. The language comes alive! How I hate to hear the teacher and parent say "Show me", "Point to the symbol" instead of "Talk to me" or "Tell me". The symbol board is the child's voice and should be treated as such, as are the hands in manual signing. Every symbol user's home should have a constant supply of scrap paper and black felt pens, or a wipe-off board which is always handy for conversations with the child.

We were two years into our symbol program before I realized that in spite of all my talks with parents, they were confused by Bliss and felt ill at ease with the system. I presumed this was why greater progress was not being made at home.

I conducted therefore, with the parents' enthusiastic support, a 1½ hour Blissymbolics workshop for parents every Monday morning, for the duration of 8 weeks. The numbers of parents attending varied from 4 - 6, fathers coming when work permitted.

#### WORKSHOP FORMAL

- WEEK 1 Movie - Mr. Symbol Man.  
Issued communication assessment booklets to each parent. Information on their child to be returned the following week.
- WEEK 2 Symbol worksheets: introduction to the symbol system: Transcription and homework.
- WEEK 3 As above.
- WEEK 4 As above.
- WEEK 5 Visit to Sunny Hill Hospital to see other Bliss users and methods of teaching. While there, visited the B.C. Blissymbolics Resource Centre and ordered materials parents wished for home use.
- WEEK 6 Communication assessment.
- a. Discussed normal language development and acquisition.
  - b. Discussed reasons for their child's deviation from the normal.
  - c. Discussion of their child's present level of functioning in all areas.
  - d. Discussion of parents' communication assessment sheets - pinpointed areas where parents' approaches should be changed and why.
- WEEK 7 Organization of symbol boards - the rationale for categories, colour coding etc.: The parents contributed some excellent ideas here which we have adopted on the children's boards.
- WEEK 8 Bliss symbol goals for the Summer Vacation.

### Evaluation of Parent Workshop

1. The parents felt more capable of dealing with Bliss.
2. They felt they were beginning to understand the rationale behind the symbol system, how symbols evolved and why they were combined in certain ways.
3. They were able to recognize and locate more readily the symbols on their child's board.
4. They were able to write symbols with reasonable proficiency. They still felt apprehensive about writing spontaneous utterances but felt they only needed practice.
5. They now realized the necessity for:
  - a. Good language models in the home.
  - b. Encouraging decision-making in their children.
  - c. Total involvement in the whole family in the child's symbol learning.
  - d. The need to write symbols when talking with their child.
  - e. The symbol board should always be with the child not hidden in a drawer. It is the child's voice.

### Summary

One of the main objections I encounter from the parents when introducing their child to Bliss or Manual signing, or both, is that their child will never speak. They feel that I have given up on their child and that alternative communication is the last resort, and I will no longer expect or encourage spoken language.

We were all told that there was no evidence to support the theory that the child would cease to verbalize. We now know this to be abundantly true. As the strain and tension caused by attempts at speech production are removed by channelling of the child's expressive output to a non-verbal symbol response, in nearly every case the child's spontaneous verbalizations increase. As the child's verbalizations are paired with the Bliss symbol or manual sign, the listener feels he understands the child's utterances more clearly. As this happens we have the happy bi-product of strengthening of the muscles of articulation, sound symbol association pathways being established, and all the components of speech and language being integrated into the child's verbals experience.

We must harness all the skills and resources at our disposal in order that our non-verbal children communicate to their highest potential. If we care to use it and I feel we must, the finest resource is the child's own family.

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## The Importance of Communicating

By: Nora Rothschild, B.A., D.S.P.  
Blissymbolics Communication Service

I recently had the opportunity of consulting on a case which had an interesting twist. It involved a keen, interested parent and her severely physically-handicapped seven-year-old daughter who had been newly placed in a progressive Developmental Centre with an understanding teacher.

The teacher and mother seemed to have a very good working relationship including regular school visits, frequent telephone calls and daily notes between home and school.

Due to her severe physical involvement as well as the lack of consistent 'yes' and 'no' responses - it was very difficult to assess Susan's actual level of language comprehension. In my discussion with the teacher, I learned that she had already begun training Susan's yes/no responses with two of the most frequently appearing controlled movements. Thus she was reinforcing a blink to note 'yes' and a smile to signify 'no'. In a later discussion I had with the mother, I learned that she, also, had been diligently teaching 'yes' and 'no' responses at home. She was, however accepting a smile for 'yes' and a lack of response for 'no'.

Once this obvious discrepancy was noted, the mother and teacher worked out a common set of responses - a smile for 'yes' and a blink for 'no'. I am happy to report that a short time later these responses became consistent both at home and at school. As a result Susan appears much more responsive and is ready for further pre-symbol training.

(Note: "Susan" is a fictitious name.)

## Wendy A Success Story

By: Betty & Ron Ferguson  
Caledonia, Ontario.

SUCCESS! How does one define it? Webster's dictionary defines it as, "Achievement of one's goal."

What then, is the goal of parents of a non-verbal child? To be sure, communication is the goal - spontaneous, voluntary communication. As parents of a child without speech, we tend to put words in the child's mouth. We get so used to what each of his/her movements mean, that we forget about the outside world that will greet him.

It's at this time in the child's life (when they are introduced to school and other outside influences), that we are introduced to Bliss, and to all it offers our non-verbal child. We see so many ways for this new skill to enrich our child's life. We charge ahead making plans for the future; plans that might not be realistic. As parents, we need to be mindful that our child is an individual with learning and physical limitations that are unique to him.

May we share just a little with you about our own 10 year old daughter, Wendy? Presently she attends the Bliss classroom at the Cerebral Palsy Centre in Hamilton. She has been in this class for three years and has a symbol board with approximately 125 symbols. Wendy is a severely involved cerebral palsied quadriplegic and uses an eye coding system to communicate with her symbols.

She hasn't always been in the symbol classroom. Wendy was introduced to Bliss when she attended the pre-school nursery programme at the C.P. Centre. She learned the few symbols that were given to her and could indicate them on her board when so asked. We were so excited! Wendy was learning to communicate or so we thought. However, to Wendy, they were nothing more than symbols on her board. She did not think of them as a means to communicate. She would not spontaneously initiate a thought or story other than, "Wendy loves Mommy" or, "Wendy loves Daddy". She continued to eye point to actual concrete objects for anything she really wanted, e.g., cookie jar. Because of the severity of her physical handicap, none of the electric pointer boards and other technical aids would work for her. Nothing seemed to turn Wendy "on" and she appeared to level off in performance and behaviour with no inner motivation.

At this time (Wendy was six), it was decided that she should leave the C.P. Centre and be placed in a school for the mentally retarded. Just when we thought we were getting somewhere - a setback! How difficult are the steps backward for parents! What about our plans for Wendy and Blissymbolics?

Wendy was the only non-verbal and wheelchair-bound child in her new school. In the new classroom, Wendy quickly convinced her teacher that looking at things with her eyes when she wanted something was far better than using her symbol board. The school had no other symbol users and we all agreed that we would put symbols aside for a while.

After two years, Wendy matured and showed signs of wanting to learn and share feelings. Psychological re-assessment indicated an improvement in learning behaviour and the C.P. Centre agreed to try again. She was enrolled in the symbol class operated by the Hamilton Board of Education joining seven other symbol users. These children ranged in age from six to fifteen years and in intellectual ability from retarded to average. The common denominators were their physical handicaps and inability to speak. It took a long time for Wendy to settle down and concentrate but we persevered. Thanks to the teacher's patience, Wendy learned a numbered eye-coding system with quadrants. It took eight months of the school year for Wendy to learn the numerals, the quadrant system, and the need to focus her eyes on a symbol or object for at least one second. These skills were all necessary before effective symbol learning could take place. We waited. Parents of handicapped children learn to be patient!



Wendy's news at school has now developed from the "I love mommy" - type stories to what she can remember doing on the weekend or on her holidays. She has a sense of the future telling her teachers and classmates about up-coming events such as family birthdays and sleeping over at grandma's. She initiates thoughts and feelings now and jokes and teases with her sisters and us. Without a symbol board, we would miss so much of what is Wendy's changing personality.

Please understand that Wendy has no concept of noun, verb, adjective, etc. Wendy just can't retain such information. She gives symbol stories containing three or four symbols. Nothing elaborate but so important to her. Compared with some of her classmates, Wendy's output could be considered quite meager. Some of the children give stories with ten or more symbols with everything in proper sequence. Grammatical structure is not important to us since it is beyond reasonable expectations for our daughter. What is important is that when Wendy wants to say something, she can relay it to us with even just one symbol. We don't have to play the "Twenty Questions" game anymore. She can truly communicate and her life has been enriched because of Bliss.

If we could give just one message to parents of non-verbal symbol users, it would be this: whether your child has 35 or 400 symbols, please don't compare his communication skills with other symbol children. Remember that even if the physical and mental handicaps appear the same, your child is unique, as individual as you and I. If you have realistic expectations, then each tiny step forward is progress, a blessing to be welcomed and enjoyed. Never dwell on what you child can't do but on what he CAN!

Success! Have we achieved our goal? Yes - a most resounding YES! Wendy is communicating. Not a dead-end goal but one that goes on as long as Wendy lives, sharing her personality with whomever she meets.

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### A Year To Be Free

By: Jane Green  
Newfoundland.

It was at the end of March, a time of year in Newfoundland when the winter stretches before and behind, that I realised I was a particularly fortunate human being. There was a silver lining to the fact that I was living alone and my children were grown and independent. I could be free, at least for a year.

Many people who are involved with Blissymbolics seem over busy, often torn between their commitment to their regular job and their consciousness of the needs of a pioneering programme.

At our meetings of the Blissymbolics Association of Newfoundland and Labrador we had tossed around such questions as:-

"Is there a baseline for starting to teach symbols?"

"Why do non-verbal children have such problems in learning to read?"

"How can we support symbol users in scattered areas?"

"What employment may be open to skilled symbol users?"

"What about combining symbols and signing?"

And, most important of all -

"What are other people doing?"

In a year off there would be time to study, see for myself and contribute where and what I could.

I burned my boats quite quickly, requesting an unpaid leave of absence from my school board and renting my house in St. John's from September 1st. I also completed my overdue presentor assignment for B.C.I. It is a fact of life that it is difficult to combine a full-time job with a presentor. Now was my chance to get my feet wet.

Sometimes events fall into place in a kindly manner, and I have been very blessed. An invitation to attend the B.C.I. research seminar at Stratford in mid-September graciously bought contacts and a broader perspective on the questions asked in Newfoundland. It also started off my year in Toronto.

Six weeks later, November 1979, living at the Y.W.C.A. (convenient, companionable and economical) and based at B.C.I., I know how quickly the time will race by. I may not have too many answers at the end of the year, but I shall be better prepared and will have had some experience that I shall never forget - like getting to know the people at B.C.I. and like last week in Georgia, on my first B.C.I. assignment away, feeling the enthusiasm of a new audience for the potential of Blissymbolics.

The year is beginning to crystallize - after Toronto, home to Newfoundland, then Britain, and in the summer, study. I am most grateful to all who at B.C.I. and elsewhere who have given me encouragement and advice.

If there is anyone who is contemplating a similar venture, I would at this stage thoroughly recommend it. I would also be very willing to give you any details which might be of interest. Write to me c/o B.C.I. Best Wishes!

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## Using Blissymbols With An Adult Aphasic

By: Laurie K. Deal, M.S., C.C.C.  
Loma Linda, California.

Although the primary focus of Blissymbols has been with the cerebral palsy population, symbols are being used with increasing frequency as a communication system with other populations, such as Down's Syndrome, severe oral language handicap, and adult aphasia. During the past six months, Blissymbols have been used as augmentative communicative approach system, with an adult aphasic being seen at the Department of Speech and Language Development and Blissymbolics Resource Centre at Loma Linda University Medical Center. This adult female experiences severe word-finding difficulties, in addition to severe expressive language deficits as the result of a stroke. Traditional speech and language re-training has been generally unsuccessful in helping her to regain functional speech for communication. Blissymbols were introduced with the dual purpose of stimulating word-retrieval skills, and assisting her in speech production abilities.

At the present time, her Blissymbol Communication Board consists of approximately 500 symbols displayed on a grid, which is divided into eight sections enclosed in plastic for protection, folding, and easy portability. She accesses the symbols by direct pointing, and she is encouraged to verbalize at all times. The symbols are organized according to grammatic categories of subject-nouns, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives and adverbs, and object-nouns. The alphabet and numbers are displayed across the top of the board.

Use of the symbols as a word-retrieval strategy appears to be effective. She utilizes both the word and the symbol to cue herself, and is able to verbally say the word approximately 50 to 75% of the time. She has frequently been observed to be able to retrieve the desired word when pointing at or into the general area of her Blissymbol board, although this ability appears inconsistent.

No special combined symbols have been made to meet her specific vocabulary needs; however, because the present symbol stamp vocabulary is designed for children, frequently there are no symbol stamps for the symbols she wants. In this case, she either attempts to spell the word, or use one of the symbol strategies to assist the listener in understanding what she wants to say.

When asked how the symbols help her to communicate, she replies that "symbols help me talk more". Continued work in the use of symbols with adult aphasics is needed to determine their effectiveness across several subjects, to isolate appropriate vocabulary, to expand the use of strategies to those generally used in aphasia re-training, and to determine the extent to which the word versus the symbol aids in word-retrieval for the dysnomic patient.

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### Games And Arrays With Home Computer

By: Judy McDonald and Paul Schwejda,  
Maplewood School,  
Edmonds School District,  
Seattle, Washington

(Reproduced from the Pacific Northwest Non-Vocal Communication Group Newsletter, November 1979)

Maplewood Handicapped Children's Center recently began a non-vocal communication project involving use of the Apple II Personal Computer System, produced by Apple Computer Inc. Our public school program has included four classrooms with 28 orthopedically handicapped students, at least eight of whom have demonstrated the cognitive ability to communicate but lack the physical skills to do so orally. An additional three cerebral-palsied, non-vocal students have been mainstreamed into regular education programs, continuing to receive support services through Maplewood. While non-mechanical communication boards have been quite useful for several of our children, some have lacked the cognitive or motor abilities to communicate effectively with such systems. For those who have been successful, speed and independence of their communication remains delayed.

The home computer project was conceived in fall of 1978 as the most flexible methods of (1) probing for/facilitating development of means-to-an-end skills in the lower functioning population, (2) training more efficient and independent communication skills with a wide variety of students, and (3) evaluating a variety of communication techniques prior to recommending purchase of an individual communication device for that student. Funding for equipment was secured mid-year through a private donation to the school.

The 32 K Apple II System was selected because it abilities with color, graphics, and sound would add to the motivation of our target students, who function at levels of 12 months to 14 years. The two game control buttons were replaced by Zygo microswitches. Additional equipment included: Disk II Floppy Subsystem, Applesoft Floating Point Basic Card, Trendcom 100 Thermal Printer and a 13 inch color TV.

The project to date has had 2 aspects:

- (1) Development of use of 1 to 2 control switches in a non-communicative situation. Our premise is the student should have the opportunity to enjoy and become familiar with use of a control switch to produce a result without the pressure of communicative intent. To this end, programs for 11 "Games" make use of color, sound, and graphics Tic-Tac-Toe, "Germ Warfare," "Free-Throw" and high resolution and low resolution drawing. Trial use of these programs with students functioning from 12 months to 14 years has proven the "games" to be highly motivating to both students and staff.



- (2) Use of 1 to 2 switches to select arrays from a menu and words/phrases on a given array. The results appear on the lower portion of the TV screen and may be printed on the thermal printer. The program allows writing and editing of arrays by those assisting the student.

Future plans include development of "games" to improve academic skills, such as spelling and math; development of "answer sheet" programs to correspond to work pages in a regular academic program; utilization of Blissymbols. We are quite willing (eager!) to exchange programs with others working in this area. Pooling of efforts will hopefully speed the delivery of new programs to the non-vocal individual involved. To exchange information, contact Judy McDonald, c/o B.C.I., Toronto, Ontario.

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ANNOUNCING THE OPENING OF  
THE BLISSYMBOLICS COMMUNICATION SERVICE

A DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAMME  
SUPPORT SERVICE FOR BLISSYMBOL USERS AND THOSE  
RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMME

For details and/or application forms please contact:

Shirley McNaughton  
Director,  
Blissymbolics Communication Service  
Ontario Crippled Children's Centre  
350 Rumsey Road  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4G 1R8  
(416) 425-7835

NEWS FROM THE COMMUNICATION RESOURCE CENTRE  
AT O.C.C.C.

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For our display area and for our communication assessments we desperately need:

YOUR HELP

- Please send me old symbol displays no longer in use but which have been successful
- Send me ideas you have used in accessing symbols either by a coding system using a fist or using eyes
- What have you been using for the active, mobile child who uses symbols?
- Any bright ideas in training children to use electronic equipment?
- Which of the following devices did you find most useful:
  - 1) Zygo 16
  - 2) Zygo 100
  - 3) Prentke Romich 100 symbol scanner  
200 symbol scanner  
512 symbol scanner

Please send me pictures, old displays, descriptions of different methods you are using. Anything will be accepted

Please write to:

Margrit Beesley, O.T. Reg. C.  
Communication Resource Centre  
The Ontario Crippled Children's Centre  
350 Rumsey Road  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4G 1R8



Symbol Users' Corner

○ → ←

Hello

⊥<sub>1</sub> ∅ SHELLEY

I name

My name is Shelley.

⊥<sub>1</sub> ⊥ ♥ + ! ∅

I friend girl

My friend is a girl.

⊥<sub>1</sub> <sup>^</sup> ∅ ∑ ∅<sub>L</sub> □ ∅<sub>⊥</sub> ∅<sub>⊥</sub>

I talk symbol Louise in bedroom.

I talk with Blissymbols to Louise in her bedroom.

⊥<sub>1</sub> <sup>^</sup> ± ∅<sub>⊥</sub> ∅<sub>⊥</sub>

I have electric wheelchair

I have an electric wheelchair.





Love











Shelley

Shelley is an eleven year old girl who has recently started to use a number system to indicate in which block on the board the symbol is placed. Colour coding and manual scanning help her locate the correct symbol.











Note: This instructor has included both a direct symbol meaning translation and a freer translation of the users' intended message.

 > | 

Dear people

 |  RICK.  |   s.  |  + !  s.










I am Rick. I live (in) Sunnyhill. I like hospital.

 |  + !    .  |  + !    .








I like school. I like hockey. <sup>Ⓢ</sup>

 |  + !    +   → .



I like (my) teacher and outings.

 |   →     4   .

I go (to) Teen Club (on) Wednesday evenings.

 |   →    A.W.  4 ) .







I went (to) A.W.'s drive-in last Wednesday.

  R









Love Rick

Rick is a 16 year old symbol user. He now uses an Etran and a display with 550 symbols. He has recently learned to drive an electric wheelchair controlled by his head movements.








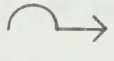












Prayer to the Lord



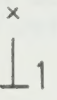







Our Father which art in heaven,


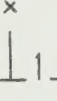



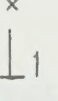




Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.











Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.












Give us, this day our daily bread. And forgive



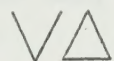


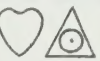



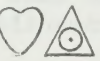


us our trespasses, as we forgive those who

trespass against us. And (not) lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom

and the power and the glory. Amen

This symbol version of the Lord's Prayer (taken intact from Semantography, pp. 734-736) was submitted by the staff and students of The Villa, Toronto.

Note that many symbols depicted and constructions used differ from those currently in use by the BCI; for example:

Lord, God

God - accepted by C.K. Bliss

Semantography



BCI



Material from symbol users is reproduced essentially as submitted in order to reflect individual creativity and different styles of expression. Neither symbols nor usage are to be regarded as models for expression or instruction.

- Note: 1) symbol composition and drawing have been updated to conform to the BCI 1000 stamp vocabulary of July 1978.
- 2) although the combine strategy is frequently employed to arrive at new symbol expression, the personal symbol creation is often not enclosed between combine indicators as required by BCI practice.

Ⓑ indicates 1) a symbol which differs from the C.K. Bliss version either in symbol form or accompanying wording or 2) a new BCI symbol authorized in the absence of requested comment from C.K. Bliss.

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STOP PRESS!!

We have just received some good news. You may remember from the last issue that Anne Warrick of Ottawa was attempting to arrange for symbol users to attend Rehab International in Winnipeg. The following lucky people have received funding:

Elaine Drover with her companion Kathy Pilkington, by the Department of Child Welfare, from St. John's, Newfoundland.

Louise Money with her companion Ena Davies by International Computers Limited, from Cardiff, Wales.

We would like to hear from other symbol users who plan to attend this convention.





